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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE 0410

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 003765

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STATE FOR SRAP HOLBROOKE, SCA/FO, SCA/A
STATE PASS ASIA/SCAA
USFORA FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/23/2019

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPANISH AMBASSADOR TO DELIVER MOU FOR MADRID'S
REVIEW, OFFERS PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Assistant Ambassador Joseph A. Mussomeli for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: Assistant Ambassador delivered our proposed Memorandum of Understanding on Life Support, Mobility and Security for U.S. civilians assigned to coalition-led PRTs in Afghanistan (septel) to Spanish Ambassador Jose Turpin Molina on November 22. Ambassador Turpin was pleased to receive the draft and promised that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Madrid would analyze and respond to our proposal. During the conversation, Turpin offered a pessimistic view of the prospects for success in Afghanistan. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Assistant Ambassador delivered the Memorandum of Understanding on Life Support, Mobility and Security for U.S. civilians based at Spanish and other coalition-led PRTs and facilities in Afghanistan to Spanish Ambassador Turpin on November 22. Ambassador Turpin promised to deliver the text unedited to Madrid for analysis and review, and said the officials there would be pleased to learn that the United States now has funding to support its civilian residents of coalition-led PRTs. Turpin's staff members said there will be room very shortly to house the two additional civilians proposed to arrive at the Spanish-led PRT in Badghis) in Western Afghanistan - in early 2010.

¶3. (C/NF) During the meeting, Turpin, who has visited Badghis only a handful of times during his five years in country, shared his grim outlook for Afghanistan, saying security in Badghis has deteriorated significantly in the last two years.

Almost complete Taliban control over Bala Murghab is spilling over to Moqur. Turpin said he believes that a marginally larger investment in western Afghanistan only three years ago against much smaller enemy forces would have made a solution to the conflict possible. Now, however, "the inkblot is growing, but of the wrong kind of ink." Turpin guessed the number of enemy forces has grown from 400 to almost 2000. He admitted, however, that there are likely only 50 or so hard-core Taliban. Turpin described engagement in Badghis province as a difficult balancing act. If the Spanish concentrate their efforts on Qal-e Now, for example, this can exacerbate tension and violence in outlying districts.

¶4. (C/NF) Turpin opined that a coalition troop increase, no matter what size, would not solve the problems of the insurgency and argued that we should pursue a policy of 'limited containment.' He also said that the Spanish are committed to stay in Afghanistan, and that there could be up to additional 500 troops in Badghis by Autumn 2010, up from 260 troops at present. Still, Turpin maintained that no one has been able to answer the question of, "What we are doing in Afghanistan?" in the last eight years. He compared the

ISAF mission to disturbing a wasp's nest and then attempting to get it under control by shooting the angry wasps with a pistol.

¶15. (C/NF) Further explaining his opinion that ISAF cannot win here, Turpin related a recent conversation with the Pakistani Ambassador to Afghanistan, in which Turpin stated "It's over. You've won." The Pakistani Ambassador demurred that Pakistan was an ally of Spain and the U.S., and Turpin replied, "You are an ally to both sides." The Pakistani laughed heartily.

¶16. (C/NF) Comment: The Spanish have a cautious approach to their PRT role. Although they operate effectively in the secure areas of the province, they rarely venture into insecure districts. The Spanish military element rotates every four months, further limiting its effectiveness. Turpin's pessimism and lack of interest in visiting the province, however, does not reflect the overall attitude of the PRT. The Spanish remain committed to the province, albeit limited by their short rotations and strict national caveats. PRT Badghis will continue to work for a more active, COIN-focused Spanish role. End Comment
Mussomeli